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THE FLOWER OF SOUVENANCE: A MOMENT IN THE TWILIGHT OF CHIVALRY

Knights in the battles for to serve
Whereof they may thank deserve.
There as the deeds of armès be,
Some must over the saltè sea,
So that by land and eke by ship
They must travel for worship,
And make many hasty roads,
Sometime to Ind, sometime to Rhodes,
And sometime into Tartary—
So that the heralds on them cry
“Vailliant! Vaillant! Lo, where he goeth!”
And then he giveth him gold and cloth.

So runs a snatch of old song which has floated across the waves of time on a half-page of forgotten manuscript. It is the epitome of the end of chivalry. Adventure, not for the deed's sake, but for the vanity of the heralds' cry;—this is chivalry in the letter, but not in spirit. And even the heralds' cry is not spontaneous, but for the gold and cloth which are their fees. The tourney which once decided quarrels by appeal to the duel *à outrance* has now become a mere pageant for the spectators, a thing without inner meaning, like a Durbar at Delhi, save as it trumpets forth the political power that lies beneath its waste and wantonness.

In one of the Lansdowne manuscripts in the British Museum, which in 1475 Sir John Paston called his “Great Book of Arms,” lies the record of an episode worthy of study as a witness to chivalry in its decay. It is eighty years since the publication in print of this old herald's story, and it cannot be said that readers have greatly concerned themselves with the volume,¹ yet the ancient documents have a real value. Nowhere else is a tourney in England so fully treated, from the challenge to the lists. Nowhere do we see better the twilight of chivalry. At the barriers on this day doubtless attended Sir Thomas Malory; and though as a friend of the absent Warwick he may

¹ *Excerpta Historica*, ed. Sam. Berkley, London, 1831.

have viewed with grave disapproval the reckless extravagance of his rival, Lord Scales, yet the splendor of the picture, the enthusiasm of the throngs, and the real fire and spirit of the affray must have distilled in the alembic of his imagination something of that color for romance which Malory bequeaths us in his *Morte Darthur*.

A *preux chevalier* in those times of the Roses was this same Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, whom later times called the Earl of Rivers. "Hardly could you find a man more ready with word or deed," wrote Sir Thomas More, a good judge of men. "That noble and puissant lord" Caxton called his patron; and hinted that his master's suppression of all the ill that Socrates had said of women, in Scales' translation of *The Sayings of the Philosophers*, must have proceeded out "of the very affection, love and good will that he hath unto all ladies."

Shakespeare's lament in Richard III for "the gentle Rivers" is itself but an echo of the historian de Comines' opinion, "un tres gentil chevalier."

In arms from a stripling, at twenty-four Scales was a Knight of the Garter, and Lord of the Isle of Wight. Though Warwick the King-maker and his friends looked askance at the sudden rise to power of this mere gentleman of fortune, and muttered that the Queen's brother should soon rue his pride, yet the Queen and her ladies laughed at them; and the King whom Warwick had made, the indolent Edward IV, cared nothing at all that his great ally should be so easily estranged. Lord Scales was a pleasant brother-in-arms as well as in-law, and none should dispute his favor.

So it fell that about the time young Scales received the Garter, the Queen played a jest upon him, which may go by the name of "The Flower of Souvenance." Something of the flavor of the time clings to the quaint English which preserves Lord Scales' own account of the incident; and it may well stand here intact, except for concessions to the spelling-book.

"The Wednesday next after the solemn and devout feast of the resurrection of our blessed Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, at the departing from the high mass I drew me to the Queen of England and of France and Lady of Ireland, my sovereign lady,

to whom I am right humble subject. And as I spake to her Ladyship on knee, the bonnet from mine head, as me ought — I wot not by what adventure nor how it happened — but the ladies of her company arrived about me; and they of their benovolence tied around my right thigh a collar of gold garnished with perré [*rich jewel-work*] and was made with one letter. And when I had it, it was nearer my heart than my knee.

“And to that collar was tied a noble Flower of Souvenance, enameled, and in manner of an emprise. And then one of them said to me full demurely, that should not take it aworth [*with indifference*] as at that time. And then they withdrew them all, each one in their places.

“And I abashed of this adventure rose me up, and went to thank them all of their right great honor that they did to me that time; and as I took up my bonnet, that I had let fall nigh to me, I found in it a bill written in small parchment rolled, and closed with a little thread of gold, and sealed.

“Then thought I well, that therein was the countenance [*intention*] that by them was given me.”

And so it was. The young knight, his instructions read, should do a deed of knightly worth, for the honor of his lady. Or, as the challenge itself put it, “In the worship, reverence, and help of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, of the glorious Virgin his Mother, and St. George, very tutor and patron and cry of Englishmen; in augmentation of knighthood and recommendation of noblesse; for the glorious school and study of arms, and the worthiness of my power to maintain and follow; and for to void slothfulness of time lost; and to obey and please my fair lady.”

The terms which Scales appended to this ‘long preamble of a tale’ were these: that the challenger should appear for a two-days’ joust at the noble city of London in October of that blessed year of 1465, “against a nobleman of four lineages, without reproach;” upon the first day should be run a course horseback with sharp spears and afterwards strike with swords to the number of thirty-seven strokes; on the second day he should fight, “armed afoot as to noblemen in such case appertaineth” with spear, axe, and dagger, until one or the other be borne down.

Then Chester, Herald to the King of England, carried the challenge over-sea to that most noble knight, "the Lord Bastard of Burgundy." With him the herald bore the Flower of Souvenance, set upon a kerchief of plesance, which the Lord Bastard must touch "with digne and knightly hand" for the furtherance of the challenge. And right worshipfully, if we may believe his own story, did Chester Herald accomplish his most worthy end.

It was, indeed, a spectacle to stir a herald's heart—that morning of the first of May, 1465, when Chester came at Brussels into the princely presence of Philip of Burgundy. Upon one side of the old Duke rode the Lord Bastard, to whom, as to the best knight of his time, the Flower of Souvenance should be offered; upon his other side rode young Charles, whose title "the Bold" stood yet some years of winning. When the challenge was delivered by the English herald, in his master's name, the heralds of Burgundy brought into the presence of all the Flower, covered from sight with the kerchief of plesance, and held on high between the hands of the chief Burgundian herald, Toison D'Or — whom the English scribe, with a finely national contempt for the outlandish, calls Thomson Dore! Before the Duke the corners of the kerchief were let fall, and the resplendent Flower shone revealed. Then the Lord Bastard came forward, saying to the herald, "I pray you recommend me right humbly unto my lord Scales my brother as heartily as I can; I thank him right highly of the honor that he doth to me by his writing, to the edifying and the increasing of honor; and to the fulfilling of his honorable request, I take upon me by license of my prince to touch this emprise."

Then he touched the Flower, and the Duke holding one corner of the kerchief and Charles the Bold-to-be the other, they covered the Flower worthily, and gave it back into the keeping of Chester Herald.

"And so the said Chester bode there daily with a great cheer, as pertained an herald to have, accompanied with ancient Kings of Arms and noble Heralds, nine days following." At length the reply to Lord Scales was written, and Chester returned, receiving for his fee at his departing the rich gown furred with

sables, which the Bastard had worn at the touching of the Flower, "and his doublet of black velvet garnished with arming points, and the slits of the doublet-sleeves clasped with clasps of gold; and forty Rhenish guilders."

The gratifying result of his mission was duly reported to King Edward at Greenwich, holding court among his nobility. By his side stood those dear friends, the Dukes of Gloucester and of Buckingham. Meekly the herald told his message, and showing the Flower of Souvenance, "touched by the high and noble Lord Anton Bastard of Burgundy, Count de Roche et de Bevere et de Beveresse," he fastened the Flower again "unto my Lord Scales' leg, reverently, to a collar of gold upon the same."

"And I beseech you," the simple herald continued to his monarch, "to owe thank unto my Lord Bastard, the which gave me this same rich gown and this doublet garnished in this form, the which he wore at the touching of the emprise, and forty florins, and my costs the time of my being there." The thank for which, no doubt, King Edward was graciously content to owe.

Great was the expectation in England for the coming of the Bastard and the fulfilling of the engagement. The wealth and lavishness of the Burgundians was the subject of wonder among Englishmen. "As for the Duke's court," wrote an English visitor of the time, "I heard never of none like to it, save King Arthur's court . . . for without that they have it by wishes, I heard never of so great plenty, as there is."

King Edward, too, was no less anxious to hear of the arrival of the knights of Burgundy. Behind all the veil of chivalrous pretence it is easy, after the event, to read his desire to obtain an alliance with this powerful enemy of France. The friendship begun in the extravagant passage-at-arms was to be of account five years later, when Edward and Scales, exiles and suppliants, received from Charles the Bold the arms with which Edward regained his slippery throne. And not only was the joust thus profitable to Edward, but his own personal popularity with the citizens of London, the second great cause of Edward's final triumph, was due in no small degree to the joyous specta-

cles of chivalry which his lavish indolence afforded them. A London MS. of the time says of the King, "Of a more famous Knight I never read since the time of Arthur's days." Like the visits of the late Edward VII, the mediæval jousts might not only mask political designs, but increase the favor of the multitude.

Some few scores with the King of France must be settled first, however, and the Lord Bastard must flesh his sword at Monthéry and elsewhere, before he could visit England. The Liégeois, also, showed little appreciation of the necessity of the prompt fulfilling of knightly word; and in all, two years were to pass before the Flower might be won. But in the spring of 1467 came the time of peace, and the Bastard hastened to announce his intention of doing his devoir. Meanwhile Lord Scales kept in practice. In April of that year Sir John Paston, who was wasting his patrimony at London, wrote to his brother in the country: "My hand was hurt at the tourney at Eltham upon Wednesday last. I would that you had been there and had seen it, for it was the goodliest sight that was seen in England this forty years of so few men. There was upon the one side within, the King, my Lord Scales, myself, and Sellenger; and without, my Lord Chamberlain, Sir John Woodville, Sir Thomas Montgomery, and John Aparre."

To which his loyal but long-suffering younger brother, holding together as best he could the precarious heritage of the Pastons, replied: "By truth, I had liefer see you once in Caister Hall, than to see as many King's tourneys as might be betwixt Eltham and London. . . . I may no more without coinage."

Eltham and London, however, were not of the younger brother's mind. For three weeks Garter King at Arms cooled his heels at Gravesend, awaiting the arrival of the Lord Bastard, while Lord Scales practised hard at Greenwich. At last, on May 27th, Burgundy's ships were sighted, and presently dropped anchor, bearing a princely retinue of over four hundred "noble lords, knights, squires, and others." At London they were welcomed by the Lord Constable of England, with lords, knights, squires, aldermen, and rich commoners of the city "ordained in seven barges and a galley, richly beseen and arrayed." Those

who could not get into the barges waited to welcome the Lord Bastard at Billing's Gate, whence the escort wound through Cornhill and Eastcheap and by St. Paul's to the Bishop's palace of Salisbury in Fleet Street, "richly appareled by the King, and hung with beds of cloth of gold for his lodging within the town." Two miles away another property of the same Bishop was reserved for a ground for the Burgundians' secret practice.

Three days later, "with the sound of clarion, trumpets, shalmoes, and other," "as it belonged to a prince royal," entered King Edward in state, and opened Parliament, only to prorogue it immediately until the joust was over.² Lord Scales arrived shortly after from Greenwich, "where he had tarried long and many a day," and put up at the Bishop of Ely's palace in Holborn, "where he kept a solemn and a worshipful household, richly beseen with rich arras of silk and cloths of gold."

Soon began the preliminaries as to the tourney. The Lord Bastard's council desired reassurance in several particulars. A certain squire of Germany had of late jousted the Duke of Burgundy, upon whose horse-armor jutted out three long daggers; and the Duke had ordered them removed. The Englishmen hearing this, promised that nothing of the kind should be worn by Lord Scales. Then the Burgundians desired construction of the rule as to a combatant being brought to ground. It was agreed, that the hand, or the knee, or any part of the body being brought to ground be held sufficient. It was further agreed, that if a horse were injured, another might be brought; and if a sword be dropped, it might be picked up; that each champion should have a man to help him put his spear in rest; that neither should ride a horse "the which were terrible to smite or bite;" and lastly that if weapons should break or be lost, they might lay on with hands alone.

These elaborate precautions taken with a gravity on either side equalled only by the managers of our modern pugilists, the Sheriff of London set forth to make the lists. An open plain of Smithfield was chosen, fourscore and ten yards in length, and

²In our own day Congress has waited upon an aviator.

fourscore in breadth. Round the oblong enclosure was made a palisade or fence of posts seven and a half feet high.

Upon a Friday, two weeks after the Lord Bastard's arrival, the lists were ready, and himself sufficiently recovered from the voyage to undertake his arms. At every other post stood a soldier, at each corner a King at Arms. Other heralds were in the scaffold before the King, "to mark all that should be done in the said field, and to make report general." The press section, it appears, is no new thing. In the field stood another herald, and four 'scouts,' at his bidding, to separate the combatants if need were.

And now the great array of spectators were in their places. The King on his fine throne was surrounded by his Council, at the very centre of the lists. On either side were stands for knights and ladies, squires, and archers; and opposite, in scarcely less brilliant array, were the Lord Mayor of London and his Aldermen, with citizens of note. Of all the great throng of knights and nobles gathered to view this play-at-arms, scarce a handful were to survive the next three years' bloody warfare of the Roses. At Stanford, at Barnet, and at Tewkesbury they should wear the Red and White of those other Flowers of Souvenance, until Edward might grip more firmly his debatable seat.

The entrance of the champions upon the field of the lists afforded an opportunity of splendid display. The provision for remounts in the articles of agreement permitted a procession of finely caparisoned horses, each ridden by a richly dressed page. Lord Scales paraded nine horses, the Lord Bastard eight. Here a charger stood "in a trapper of white cloth of gold, with a cross of St. George of crimson velvet, bordered with a fringe of gold."

There waited others in yellow, russet, purple, and green, furred in sables, charged with goldwork "with borders of velvet upon velvet." Opposite were others no less rich in crimson, silver, and violet. The palm was awarded by common consent, no doubt, to the trappings of the Lord Bastard's fifth horse, "with a trapper of crimson velvet to the foot, embroidered with a device of eyes of goldsmith's work, full of tears."

So each knight retired to his pavilion, until the proclamation had been declared by the four heralds, at the four corners of the field. "For the augmentation of martial discipline and knightly honour, necessary for the tuition of the Faith Catholic against heretics and miscreants, and to the defence of the right of kings and princes and their estates," the public were warned "on pain of imprisonment, not to approach the lists, or make any noise, murmur, or shout, or any other manner token or sign whereby the said lords. . . . shall be troubled or comforted" No guidance from the side-lines, no disconcertments from the grandstand, were to be sanctioned.

And now the herald of the lists cried, "*Lessez Aler.*" The achievement and sum of all this great coil of preparation was come. Alas, for the old days of chivalry! Courageously, the old herald tells us, did the brave knights run their course; *but neither hit the other!* Then each champion voided his spear lightly, and assailed other stoutly with swords. A single blow only had been exchanged, when the accident against which the Lord Bastard had sought to protect himself took place. His horse struck against a sharp steel point of the saddle of Lord Scales, and fell backwards upon his rider. A herald at once approached the discomfited knight, and demanded if he wished a remount. "His answer was, 'That it was no season.'" In vain did Lord Scales ride before the King to prove that his saddle had no deceitful weapons fastened upon it; the Lord Bastard would fight him no more on horseback. "To-day," he was reported to have said, "you have fought a horse; to-morrow you shall fight a man." Thus ended the first assay.

Next day the same great gathering witnessed the course afoot, with axes and daggers. "Great and cumbrous and thick strokes" did each smite at the other, "the Lord Scales with the head of his axe before, the tother with the small end;" yet, for a long time, neither apparently hurt the other until at last Lord Scales struck the Lord Bastard "a cruel blow in the side of the visern of the basinet," which, though not wounding, must have sorely rattled about the wits of the royal visitor.

At once King Edward threw down his warder, crying "Ho!"

And all was over.³ It was no part of the King's plan that the Bastard should suffer injury. There was too much at stake. The public must be content, perforce, with the regale of jousts that followed on Sunday and Monday, between other Burgundian and English knights. In the midst of it came the news of Duke Philip's death; and, more hastily than they had come, the Bastard and his friends departed.

Rich were the gifts the heralds earned from generous Lord Scales, to the augmentation of his honor. At a later tourney in which this "seducious friend of the King," as Warwick called him, took part, there were knights discourteous enough, the herald tells us, to protest against the exorbitant demands of the College of Arms. A compromise was finally effected by the King, so that in future an earl should pay ten marks, a baron four pounds, a knight forty shillings, and an esquire twenty-six shillings eightpence; "of which composition the officers of Arms were but so contented. And whereas the noble Earl of Rivers was taxed by the judges at ten marks, he sent off his benevolence to the officers of arms twenty marks, like a nobleman, and desired them to be contented for him and his hermitage, to whom God send good life and long, Amen."

"Penny is an hardy knight," says the old song.

So the great joust ended, with its rich display, its elaborate ceremonies, and its pitiful conclusion. Yet the money was not vainly spent. The knight of Burgundy carried back to his brother Duke Charles a good report of the Princess Margaret, King Edward's sister; and within the twelvemonth Lord Scales escorted the Princess to the Low Countries, to be the Duke's bride. "The Duke," we are told, "took her in his arms and kissed her, and then kissed all the ladies and gentlewomen, and when he had so done, looked and regarded to the beauty of her, he rejoiced . . . in such case me thought as Troilus was in, for he tarmed and avised her a tract of time ere he went to her again."

"And Lorde! so he gan godely on hir se,
That never his loke ne blente fro hir face!"

³ One cannot help recalling the similar scene in *Richard II.*

The alliance begun in the friendly passage-at-arms was thus sealed and affirmed by the laws of the other code to which knights of that age paid homage—the Court of Love.

And what of the Flower of Souvenance? Evidently it remained secure upon the noble leg of gentle Scales, who had worthily accomplished his emprise. History, at any rate, concerns herself no more about it.

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